

the "guiding stars" lies in their richness and their ability to bring new insights to medical ethics through analogy with non-medical settings. Their weakness is their vagueness. In the chapter on assisted reproduction this weakness is most apparent. In this chapter the authors make assertions without argument and with a lack of insight into when an issue requires conceptual analysis and when it requires empirical data. For example, some men do not have sufficiently healthy sperm to father a child. For couples for whom the man has this problem artificial insemination using sperm from a donor can be of immense value. The question of how families created by this means develop, and how the parents and children feel, is primarily a matter for empirical sociological study. Nelson and Nelson, however, dismiss artificial insemination on the basis of a crude analogy. They write: "(artificial insemination) deliberately severs the genetic strand of fatherhood from the nurturing and identity-forging strands, thereby perpetuating an ancient pattern in our culture of permitting men to impregnate women and then walk away" (page 162).

The Patient in the Family is a well-written and continually stimulating book which I would strongly recommend to all those who feel that our modern obsession with the individual patient has led to excessive marginalisation of the role of families in health care.

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Bioethics in High Schools in Australia, Japan and New Zealand

Darryl R J Macer, Yukiko Asada, Miho Tsuzuki, Shiro Akiyama and Nobuko Y Macer, Ibaraki, Japan, Eubios Ethics Institute, 1996, 192 pages, £15.

During 1993 the authors of this book conducted an "international bioethics education survey" (page 1) amongst biology and social studies teachers in secondary schools in Australia, Japan

and New Zealand. The book, written in English to page 125 and thereafter in Japanese, consists of a report of this survey.

It is published by the Eubios Ethics Institute (Tsukuba Science City, Japan) which is "a nonprofit group that aims to stimulate the discussion of ethical issues, and how we may use new technology in ways consistent with 'good life'" (page ii). For this group, "bioethics" means the study of ethical issues arising from human involvement with life, and could be called simply the 'love of life'" (page 1).

In general, the purpose of the survey was to establish the extent to which teachers discuss in class "the social, ethical and/or environmental issues associated with applications of the scientific developments" (page 5), viz pesticides, *in vitro* fertilisation, prenatal diagnosis, biological pest control, eugenics, computers, biotechnology, nuclear power, AIDS, human gene therapy, fibre optics, bioethics and genetic engineering in plants, micro-organisms and animals (taken from table 2 page 5).

The book gives every detail of the research. Samples were not entirely random, particularly in Australia where private schools were over-represented. Response rates were higher for biology teachers (40% Japan, 48% Australia and 55% New Zealand; total number=1,017) than they were for social studies teachers (27%, 22% and 26% respectively; total number=593). Pages 46-118 give every word of every response from every open-ended question by every respondent.

In reporting the results of qualitative research it is often helpful and interesting to see some verbatim quotes from subjects, but to be presented with columns and columns of responses to open questions consisting of "don't know", "need more teaching materials", "students need to be made aware" etc is simply tedious. Altogether this is a poorly digested piece of research. It would have benefited from being summarised as a formal paper for an edited journal.

All of which is disappointing because the topic is important. Like most medical schools around the world we have a longitudinal integrated course in medical ethics. For the past ten years this has culminated

in interdisciplinary problem-oriented symposia for fifth-year students. Even more now than in the past, we reach the end of these sessions with students saying they do not wish to make decisions in medical ethics without further guidance from society as a whole. Public debate is urgently required on some of the most pressing issues in medical ethics and bioethics.

Such debate would require more education in bioethics at every level. From the point of view of cognitive development students are equipped from their early teens onwards to tackle the complex questions involved. Teachers report that their students are often more interested in the ethics of, for example, *in vitro* reproduction than they are in the technical aspects.

Educating future citizens to take an active role in the debate seems an entirely worthy goal. Surveying teachers in different countries was probably a necessary first step. So it is unfortunate that the research undertaken by this team was not better presented. It could have made a valuable contribution. As it is it may serve to raise awareness of the issues, but little else.

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